

## Diagnosis of the current state of the gastronomic offer in the coastal profile of the province of Santa Elena, Ecuador

Diagnostico el estado actual de la oferta gastronómica en el perfil costero de la provincia de Santa Elena, Ecuador

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### ABSTRACT

A result of the research project Gastronomic Identity of the Coastal Profile of Santa Elena is presented, corresponding to the Gastronomy career of the Instituto Superior Tecnológico Espíritu Santo. It answers a diagnosis of the current state of the gastronomic offer in the coastal profile of the province of Santa Elena. The research is of an exploratory type guided by empirical methods aided by techniques and instruments such as the survey and interview carried out in 4 communities corresponding to the area under investigation with a view to identifying their current gastronomic offer and the preservation of the identity that is part of their estate. The results will help find alternative solutions to rescue culinary values linked to national identity.

**Keywords:** Diagnosis, gastronomic offer, coastal profile, Santa Elena

### RESUMEN

Se presenta un resultado del proyecto de investigación Identidad Gastronómica del Perfil Costero de Santa Elena, correspondiente a la carrera de Gastronomía del Instituto Superior Tecnológico Espíritu Santo. El mismo responde a un diagnóstico el estado actual de la oferta gastronómica en el perfil costero de la provincia de Santa Elena. La

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investigación es de tipo exploratoria guiada por métodos empíricos auxiliada de técnicas e instrumentos como la encuesta y entrevista realizada a 4 comunidades correspondiente a la zona objeto de investigación con vista de identificar su actual oferta gastronómica y la preservación de la identidad que forma parte de sus raíces. Los resultados ayudarán a buscar alternativas de solución para rescatar los valores culinarios vinculados a la identidad nacional.

**Palabras clave:** Diagnóstico, oferta gastronómica, perfil costero, Santa Elena

## INTRODUCTION

The research project has been proposed due to the lack of knowledge of the gastronomic identity in the coastal profile of Santa Elena, there is no transition of recipes from generation to generation, and there is also little information about traditional recipes, the bearers of knowledge can no longer express clearly because of their advanced age.

In order to rescue the gastronomic identity of the communes of the road of the gods, it is a priority that the Tecnológico Universitario Espíritu Santo, with the support of the students of the career in Higher Technology in gastronomy, develop and implement strategies and actions to rescue and preserve the gastronomic identity of the mentioned communes. In this sense, the article responds to the objective of identifying the current gastronomic offer and the preservation of the identity that is part of the roots of the coastal profile of Santa Elena.

### Road of the Gods

In the southeast of the Chongón-Colonche mountain range, there is a system of roads to the coast, whose main access is the old Guayaquil-Salinas highway. Along this axis of communication and transit of products are located pre-Hispanic monoliths in Chongón, Juntas del Pacífico, La Barranca (Julio Moreno), Sube y Baja and Sacachún, communities in which these archaeological remains are preserved as part of their historical memory. The route of the Guancavilca Gods traces a map of millenary thought in which coexist the conceptions about life and the forms of social organization preserved by the current communities as a legacy of their ancestors. The preservation of this archaeological heritage contributes to cementing the knowledge that new generations acquire from pre-Hispanic cultures to revitalize their historical memory and strengthen their identity (Freire, 2013) (Freire, 2013).

### Gastronomic identity

It is worth noting a theoretical precedent linked to gastronomic identity, among which stands out the "Food Identity Theory", which argues that food and culinary practices are

fundamental elements in the construction of individual and collective identity, being this, a perspective argues that what a person or community chooses to consume can influence their sense of belonging and how they perceive themselves (Sosa, 2022). In this sense, authors such as Mary Douglas and Michael Herzfeld, have contributed to the understanding of how food can be intrinsically linked to identity, from here emerge theories linked to Claude Levi-Strauss already mentioned above, such as "The theory of gastronomy as cultural identity" (Valencia, 2020) which stresses the importance of food as a distinctive element of culture and how cultural identity is reflected through gastronomic practices, examining that food habits can reveal deep aspects of a society and how this cultural identity is expressed through the food consumed. (Otálvalo, 2022) Concretely these aspects and the focus of the research have been directed to the coastal province of Santa Elena where there is a route that is called the "HUANCAVILCAS" ROAD OF THE GODS, which includes the communes of: Limoncito, Julio Moreno, Las Juntas del Pacífico, Sube y Baja, Sacachún and Buenos Aires, communes dating from 800 AD to 1532 AD.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Setting:** Students and teachers of the Gastronomy career of the Instituto Superior Tecnológico Universitario Espíritu Santo participated.

**Design:** The research is of an exploratory type guided by empirical methods aided by techniques and instruments such as the survey and interview carried out in 4 communities corresponding to the area under investigation in order to identify their current gastronomic offer and the preservation of the identity that is part of their roots.

**Population:** For the development of the sample, the formula proposed by Murray and Larry (2005) was used, employing simple random sampling, the statistical method used was Microsoft Excel, and for an analysis at this level, the population aged 20 years and older was taken into consideration. The sources used for the development of the survey were primary and secondary, in the first case this instrument was applied to people aged 20 years and older and interviews were conducted with people aged 75 years and older, and secondary sources were obtained from the presidents of the communes documents of the history of these.

**Table 1.** *Dates of field research*

<b>DATE PERSONS SURVEYED NUMBER SURVEYED</b>	<b>DATE PERSONS SURVEYED NUMBER SURVEYED</b>	<b>DATE PERSONS SURVEYED NUMBER SURVEYED</b>
<b>10-NOV-23</b>	COMUNA DE LIMONCITO	80
	COMUNA DE LAS JUNTAS	74
<b>11-NOV-023</b>	COMUNA DE JULIO MORENO	88
	COMUNA DE SUBE Y BAJA	60
<b>12-NOV-023</b>	COMUNA DE SACACHÚN	35
	COMUNA DE BUENOS AÍRES	66
<b>Total, de encuestados.</b>		<b>403</b>

- Setting: The research was carried out in the sector of the road of the gods in the province of Santa Elena, taking into account the municipalities of: Limoncito, Julio Moreno Las Juntas del Pacifico, Sube y Baja, Sacachún and Buenos Aires.

- Interventions: The technique used were surveys conducted according to the following number of people taking into account the formula used: LIMONCITO (80), LAS JUNTAS (74), JULIO MORENO (88), SUBE Y BAJA (60), SACACHÚN (35), BUENOS AIRES (66).

- Statistical analysis:

Once the analysis of the surveys conducted was carried out, the following results were obtained. The majority of respondents indicated that, if they know the ancestral dishes, and that they are an important part of their culture, which allows transmitting the traditional and values from generation to generation.

Most of those surveyed do not know how the ancestral dishes of the commune are prepared, so it is necessary that this work be done jointly with the communities as well as with the TES. A generational shift in preferences is observed, with younger respondents showing interest in fast food dishes, while older respondents tend to prefer traditional dishes.

The majority of respondents determine that educational programs should be implemented to teach new generations about the importance of traditional gastronomy, likewise highlighting the cultural importance of certain dishes, linking them to celebrations, rituals and family events.

Most of the respondents do not know how the ancestral dishes of the commune are prepared, so there needs to be a generational change in preferences, with younger respondents showing interest in fast food dishes, while the older ones tend to prefer traditional dishes, therefore, it is convenient to develop the recipe book "Rescue of the Gastronomic Identity of the WAY OF THE GODS "GUANCAVILCA" of the province of Santa Elena.

Most of the respondents do not know the origin, history and meaning of each ancestral food dish, as well as indicate that gastronomy is part of the culture, but that it is not well communicated and also that the new generations do not know the ancestral gastronomy, so it is necessary that this project be shared with the tourism career.

The majority of those surveyed determined that there has been an increase in fast food, and that ancestral foods have been lost and that they appear in religious feasts or festivities.

General analysis of the questions:

- Question 1, it is observed that the majority of the respondents 85 % determine that, yes they know the ancestral dishes of the commune, but it is required that they are known locally, nationally and internationally.
- Question 2, it is determined that 85% of the 403 people surveyed do not know how the ancestral dishes of the commune are prepared, so it is necessary that this work be done jointly with the communities as well as with the TES.
- Question No. 3, it is observed that 87% of those surveyed do not know the origin, history and meaning of each ancestral food dish, therefore, it is advisable to develop the recipe book "Rescue of the Gastronomic Identity of the "GUANCAVILCA" WAY OF THE GODS "GUANCAVILCA" of the province of Santa Elena.
- Question 4, it is observed that 92% of the respondents accept that gastronomy is part of the culture, but that it is not very well communicated.
- Question 5, 89% of respondents determined that the new generations do not know the ancestral gastronomy, so it is necessary that this project be shared with the tourism career.
- Question 6, 95% of those surveyed determined that fast food is the most present food nowadays, and that ancient ancestral foods should be taught.
- Question 7, 98% of those surveyed determined that the religious aspect is more predominant than the gastronomic aspect, so it is necessary to develop this project since it will allow two types of income, tourism and gastronomy.

- Question 8, 86% of those surveyed determined that local, regional, national and international publicity of local ancestral gastronomy would improve the economic development of the communities.
- Question 9, 86% of the respondents determined that it is necessary to highlight ancestral gastronomy, since it will encourage the presence of tourism in the communities.
- Question 10, 87% of the respondents require gastronomic training to improve the healthiness of the communities, as well as to strengthen the institutional image of the TES.
- Question 11, 83% of the respondents do not have written documents on ancestral recipes; therefore, it is essential to achieve the general objective of the project.
- Question 12, 94% of the respondents stated that firewood has been the material they have used the most for the preparation of traditional dishes, so it is necessary to learn about new techniques used, as well as the environmental damage this causes.
- Question 13, 95% of the respondents have not received GMP training; training in this knowledge will improve the quality of food preparation.
- Question 14, 96% of the respondents would like to receive training on cooking techniques, which would allow them to improve food preparation processes.

## RESULTS

The results suggest that the community of the commune of the gods in Santa Elena has not maintained its culinary traditions over time. People older than 45 years perform the traditional dishes on festive dates, indicating a continuity in the preparation and appreciation of these recipes throughout the generations. It is observed that traditional food played a key role in the cultural heritage of the community. With people over 70 years old, they show a deep sense of cultural identity and belonging through the preservation and transmission of traditional recipes to younger generations, recipes that are losing their knowledge to society as there is no massification of these traditions that should be strengthened in the tourism field.

Despite the strong connection with traditional dishes, there could be signs of changes in the eating habits of the community as it was determined that currently the food that the new generation consumes is fast food.

If this project would be strengthened with the TES tourism career, there would be a potential for the development of gastronomic tourism in the communes of the path of

the gods. This could contribute to local economic development and the promotion of the region's unique culinary culture.

Given the age of the respondents and the possibility that some traditional recipes are in danger of being lost, the importance of preserving and documenting these recipes is highlighted. This could be done through local initiatives, such as the creation of a recipe book with the main typical dishes that characterize the Coastal Profile in the province of Santa Elena, Ecuador, in order to contribute to the rescue of the gastronomic identity of the sector.

In the province of Santa Elena the Valdivia, Guancavilca and other cultures were settled, the same that were linked to the sea, beaches, estuaries and mangroves, and protected by the CHONGÓN-COLONCHE CORDILLERA, the main ancestral dishes were: roasted fish, roasted yucca, roasted green, roasted deer, roasted guate, curd, whey, milk cream, roasted goat, chica de jora, hierbaluisa water, shaved plantain colada, roasted sweet potato, pipián, and with the presence of the Spanish, and the introduction of both new species and ingredients and culinary techniques, these dishes were mixed until what is known today as "traditional" dishes: arroz marinero, fried fish and its variations, seco de chivo, seco de pato, seco de venado, seco de guante, steamed fish, duck rebosado, caldo de gallina criolla, cazuela and its variants, and according to data that were provided by the colonists of the sector, it is estimated that the presence of shrimp was in the 1950s.

Gastronomy is a cultural expression that reflects the history, heritage and identity of a people. In the case of the Camino de los Dios in the province of Santa Elena, Ecuador, the gastronomy is characterized by its richness and variety, product of the influence of the aboriginal, Spanish and Afro-Ecuadorian cultures. In recent times, external influences and modern trends have affected the traditional culinary traditions, which is why it is necessary to rescue and preserve the gastronomic identity, through a recipe book, a document that will act as a cultural archive for future generations to identify their traditions and customs. This recipe book will be the compendium not only of the recipes, but also the history of the creation of each commune and will be a tool to preserve the history, techniques and procedures from generation to generation.

As a main aspect of the recipe book will be reflected the stories and anecdotes of each recipe becoming an educational and cultural document, so that young people can learn and prepare traditional dishes, and also that they can inform outside their borders the living history of their community.

This document will not only have a local, but also a national, regional and international impact, since it will promote tourism in the sector, as well as increase local economic income.

## CONCLUSIONS

The ancestral dishes presented by the colonists are: roasted fish, roasted yucca, roasted green, roasted deer, roasted guate, curd, buttermilk, milk cream, roasted goat, chica de jora, herb and lemon verbena water, shaved plantain colada, roasted sweet potato and pipián.

With the presence of the Spaniards, and the introduction of new species and ingredients as well as culinary techniques, these dishes were mixed until what today is known as "traditional" dishes: seafood rice, fried fish and its variations, seco de chivo, seco de pato, seco de venado, seco de guante, steamed fish, duck, caldo de gallina criolla, cazuela and its variants, and according to data provided by the settlers of the sector, it is estimated that the presence of shrimp was in the 1950s.

A recipe book that highlights the main typical dishes of the coastal profile in the province of Santa Elena is presented as a powerful tool for the rescue of the gastronomic identity of the sector. Beyond being a simple compendium of recipes, it acts as a means for the conservation, transmission and promotion of local culinary traditions. This project not only contributes to the community's pride and connection with its heritage, but also projects the cultural richness of Santa Elena nationally and internationally.

In summary, the survey reveals a strong emotional and cultural connection of people over 45 years of age in the commune of the gods in Santa Elena with traditional dishes. At the same time, it suggests the need to maintain a balance between preserving cultural heritage and adapting to possible changes in the eating habits of modern society.

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